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January 29, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo

SUBJECT: ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) COUNTYWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the successful completion of a five-month EBT pilot in two of my district offices, I am pleased to announce that we are proceeding with implementing EBT Countywide. We are phasing in 29 offices over a two-month period based on a North/South split of the County, as follows:

- Approved participants served by 14 of our districts (Group I/North County) will begin receiving their benefits through EBT effective February 1, 2004. New applicants in Group I approved after January 17, 2004 have been receiving their benefits through EBT.
- Approved participants served by the remaining 15 districts (Group II/South County) are scheduled to begin receiving their benefits through EBT effective March 1, 2004. New applicants in Group II approved after February 14, 2004 will receive their benefits through EBT.

In preparation for Countywide implementation, the following has taken place:

- All cash and Food Stamp participants have been sent advance notification and training material about EBT, as well as their EBT (debit-like) cards and Personal Identification Numbers (PINs).
- DPSS staff have received their training on EBT and participant training in 29 different locations Countywide is underway.
- The necessary EBT equipment and software have been deployed and installed in DPSS offices, as well as in over 5000 retailer locations and financial institutions throughout the County.
- All LEADER and EBT system programming has been completed and tested by DPSS, the State and Citicorp, the State's EBT contractor.

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- State and DPSS implementation teams have been formed to provide field support to both participants and retailers. During the pilot, being in the stores proved very helpful to both participants and retailers. By observing point-of-sale device messages, we were well-informed to troubleshoot participant problems on the spot.

We developed a similar strategy with Countywide implementation, focusing on ATMs, check cashers, and large grocery stores with high Food Stamp redemptions. Any problems identified in the field that cannot be resolved on the spot will be immediately referred to a central command center for problem resolution. The teams will be in place throughout the County from January 20 through April 10.

In deference to the unions and our represented employees, however, we do not plan to deploy represented staff to a striking/locked out grocery store. Instead, we have contacted the impacted stores in Group I and given them a central contact number at DPSS to call in case our participants experience any EBT-related problems. If the problem cannot be resolved over the phone, DPSS will send an unrepresented manager to the store to assist.

- DPSS triage teams have also been established in each district to immediately troubleshoot any issues that arise for our participants during the initial months of implementation.
- The existing issuance system, LA FAIR, will remain operational until March 1. At that time, it will be shut down and all contracts with existing benefit issuance outlets will expire.

Based on the pilot experience and lessons learned, we feel confident in the readiness of DPSS, the State, and Citicorp to implement EBT Countywide.

By late February, I will send you an update on the first 10 days' experience issuing cash and food benefits through EBT.

BY:mq

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel